

# Centerville Junior High School 625 South Main Centerville, Utah 84014

March 28-29, 2006



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

# THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

# Centerville Junior High School 625 South Main Centerville, Utah 84014

March 28-29, 2006

#### **UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

# DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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#### **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 28-29, 2006, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Centerville Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Interim Principal Blake Daniels is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Centerville Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Centerville Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Dr. Anabel Pinero	Foreign Language Supervisor
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Shelia Mavin	Art Supervisor
Richard Marsden	Music Supervisor
Lisa Jasumback	Math Supervisor
Jill Snyder	Language Arts Supervisor
John L. Robison	P.E./Health Supervisor

# CENTERVILLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

# **ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

# **School Administration**

Blake Daniels Kathy Evans Kendall Summers	Assistant Principal		
Counseling			
Leona Murray			
Marni Willard			
Malissa Simonson	Counselor, Intern		
Support Staff			
Debbie Hoehne	Head Secretary		
Georgia Rasmussen			
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Blaine Morton	Assistant Head Custodian		
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Charles Loreno	Part-time Custodian		
Tyler Crawford	Part-time Custodian		
Kathy Burningham	Lunchroom Manager		
Launa Blackburn	Food Services		
LoraLee Dastrup	Food Services		
Sharon Deamer	Food Services		
Shauna DeWaal	Food Services		
Ione Johnson			
Kay Pace	Food Services		
Karrin Knuth	Food Services		
Janet Preece	Food Services		
Denise Curtis	Teacher Assistant		
Amber Stott			
Peggy Padilla			
Jill Tingey			
Gary Thomas	Resource Officer		

# **Faculty**

Sarah Anderson
Kathleen Bradford
Gary Brubaker
Eric Burt
Joyce Casella
Sherryl Cazier
Deanne Cooper
Shelly Damron
Gloria Daniels
Boyd Dart
Joanne Day
Linda Edwards
Craig Free
Linda Freeman

Gordon Gardiner
Connie Jeppesen
Penny Keeler
Kathleen Lee
Marla Lenz
Karen Mauerman
Boyd Mitchell
Kirk Monson
Mark Pierce
Madilyn Pitcher
David Plant
Patrick Quigg
Robert Richards
Estelle Rigby

Heidi Schwartz Diana Shinn Richard Siegel Sean Simons Malissa Simonson Elizabeth Stewart Debbie Stringham Judith Tanner Robert Thorup Tri Tran

Ryan Van Natter

Dale Yates Leslie Zabriskie

#### CENTERVILLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

#### MISSION STATEMENT

In cooperation with families and community, it is the goal of Centerville Junior High School to equip students with the knowledge and skills to be PRODUCTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE, AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS in an ever changing world.

"CJHS is on PAR"

#### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- Student learning in a safe, supportive and positive environment is the school's chief priority.
- Student learning is a responsibility shared by students, families, school, and community.
- Student achievement is cultivated by a variety of teaching methods, assessments, and resources to accommodate diverse learning styles and needs.
- Relevant, challenging expectations encourage students to think and solve problems creatively.
- Students need to demonstrate their understanding of essential knowledge and skills by applying their learning in meaningful contexts.
- Each student is a valued individual.
- Education in good citizenship and character development promotes social and personal responsibility.
- Communication is a key to life-long learning and is the shared responsibility of the school community.

# MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Catherine Jensen, Sunset Ridge Middle School, Jordan School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Kim Baker, West Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Daniel Barney, South Ogden Junior High School, Weber School District

Stella Hageman, Matheson Junior High School, Granite School District

Michael Goodman, Mount Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

#### VISITING TEAM REPORT

#### CENTERVILLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE** 

Centerville Junior High has been the home of the Chargers since 1965. The administration, faculty, student body, and parents together have made Centerville Junior High the pride of the community.

Although the leadership has changed over time, Charger pride has been upheld. It has continued to grow and change with the times. Presently the student enrollment is just below 1,000, with the average student being Caucasian. Centerville Junior High currently houses 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, for whom the school offers several extracurricular.

The administrators continue to provide excellent leadership, and the faculty continues to provide quality education for the students. The parents and community continue to support the faculty and students and help improve communication to the community. The students "charge forth," striving for excellence in academics. Together they work to achieve the best education.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The administrative team and teachers have made a significant effort to collect and analyze student achievement data in the school. In particular, the school analyzed the reading data, addressing the need to close the achievement gap present for a group of students. Efforts have begun to identify these students and implement a new Reading 180 program, as well as tutoring and teaching strategies to assist the students and help them be more successful. The school would benefit from data compiled by these programs showing improvement and areas of concern. The analysis of CRT data shows continuing improvement in several areas, even while school enrollment is falling. This is to be commended.

The CRT data also points out that a higher number of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students are struggling in Math 7. The Visiting Team urges the staff to provide teachers with a targeted list of students who score low so they can provide intervention and support across all content areas.

Stakeholder perception surveys were administered to parents, students, and half of the faculty. Data was provided in the profile, but little analysis was given.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Centerville Junior High is strongly encouraged to continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze student achievement and behavior data to guide decisions made by the school. This effort should extend to include student attendance data, discipline data, and disaggregation of test data.

## **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Continuing inquiry into reading achievement data is recommended. As teachers continue to implement reading strategies in content classrooms, continuing evaluations of those practices and their effectiveness are also recommended.
- The staff should consider participating in an examination of the data within each department. This should include a study of instructional and assessment strategies employed, grading standards, and the application of the desired results for student learning. This would allow each department and teacher to identify performance goals and standards.
- As the school refines its action plans to reflect the implementation of the DRSLs, it is recommended that the staff collect and analyze data of student achievement and disaggregate the data to guide instruction.
- The analysis of course grades, attendance, and discipline patterns should be included in the school's comprehensive profile in the future.

#### **CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

The Visiting Team commends Centerville Junior High School for its engagement in the self-study process. The school completed every aspect of "Collaborating for Student Achievement" over the past two years, developing a mission, beliefs, and DRSLs. Departments have completed a reflective analysis of current practices and suggested areas of improvement. Organizational effectiveness has been evaluated through seven focus groups comprised of all stakeholder groups. Participating parents and students valued the experience of being included and felt their voices were being heard. The self-study process has been facilitated by teacher-leaders under the direction of the school administration. Effort has been made to include the school community through surveys of local businesses. All major aspects of the self-study process have been collaboratively completed.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The school has a long history of high academic achievement, as indicated by standardized test scores, parental involvement and support, and successful extracurricular and athletic programs. Evidence indicates some departments struggled with the new process, necessitating a fair description of current reality rather than a description of what would be ideal. The high achievement on standardized tests may be partially a result of community and socioeconomic factors. The Visiting Team suggests that the school carefully reflect on practices in order to ensure the students are stretching their learning beyond current levels, even though those levels are high. The Visiting Team suggests the departments continue to reflect on the "brutal facts of current reality" with regard to instructional practices in order to determine areas for growth and refine the process of improvement. Similarly, the Visiting Team suggests that the focus groups meet periodically to review current reality and track progress on the improvement plan. Although the school performs at a very high level on academic standardized achievement tests, the Visiting Team encourages the school to critically assess instructional practices, policies, and procedures in order to move from current reality to a higher level of effectiveness.

# CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Centerville Junior High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

#### 1. Effective Communicator

- Students communicate with clarity, purpose, and understanding of audience.
- Students use a variety of communication forms and a wide range of communication skills.

## 2. Responsible Citizen

- Students take responsibility for their personal actions.
- Students respect their own and other's dignity, needs, rights, and property.
- Students interact with others in a civil, respectful way.

# 3. Complex Thinker

- Students use multiple thinking strategies to solve a variety of problems.
- Students generate new and creative ideas in a variety of contexts.
- Students reflect on and evaluate their learning for the purpose of applying their knowledge in a variety of settings.

#### 4. Collaborator

- Students work with others in a variety of situations to achieve a common purpose.
- Students manage and evaluate their behavior as group members.
- Students effectively deal with disagreement and conflict caused by diversity of opinions and beliefs.

# **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

Several revisions were made, and a consensus on the school's mission statement, shared vision, beliefs, and goals was achieved, through meetings of parent groups, faculty members, and students, as well as staff discussion and meetings with the administration. The Visiting Team found supportive evidence of a collaborative effort to arrive at consensus that involved all stakeholders.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

The school community has defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration, faculty, and staff to support student achievement. The belief statements reflect the school's dedication to appropriate education for young adolescents. The belief statements are well thought out, insightful, and progressive. The belief statements provide the foundation for collaboration and program development. The Visiting Team commends the school for such collaborative efforts.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

The school's DRSLs, (Effective Communicator, Information Literate, Responsible Citizen, Complex Thinker, and Collaborator), are connected to the school's mission and belief statements and align with Utah Life Skills. The mission and beliefs reflect the community members' desire for the students to grow into mature, capable, and responsible adults. It is clear that the mission and belief statements drove the selection and articulation of the school's desired results for student learning. The next step would be the development of measurable assessments, along with expected levels of performance, to show progress for each DRSL.

## **Curriculum Development:**

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The faculty of Centerville Junior High implements the Utah State Core Curriculum. Curriculum mapping is begun and needs to continue on a yearly basis, which allows each teacher to verify that the State Core is being taught. Centerville Junior High's success at effectively implementing the Core Curriculum can be seen, in part, through student performance on end-of-level testing.

The district's program of Davis Essential Skills and Knowledge (DESK) is the cornerstone for defined standards. The need to respond to external mandates is evident. The teachers generally have a shared vision for student learning that is supported by parents and community members.

The Visiting Team agrees with the school's recommendation that more curriculum mapping and the implementation of a more integrated curriculum be pursued. Centerville Junior High is encouraged to continue the development of more cross-curricular activities and collaboration between departments, including the evolution of small, integrated teams that work with common groups of students. This will be supported by staff development on middle school activities scheduled for this summer that will include teachers and administration.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The DRSLs have been identified and the staff has attained general agreement on the importance of these outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to share ways they have infused the DRSLs into their subject areas and in the teaching of the Core Curriculum. The staff and students seem to have made an effort to understand and use the vocabulary of the DRSLs and reinforce what each student should be doing. The Visiting Team encourages the school to refine the instructional practices centered on the DRSLs, develop common assessments, and establish a well-defined set of standards.

#### **Quality Instructional Design:**

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

Instructional time is valued at Centerville Junior High, with disruptions generally kept to a minimum. The Visiting Team observed effective classroom management and organizational strategies. Although traditional direct instructional methods are the primary strategies in place, members of the faculty are working in cooperation with others in their departments to develop curriculum maps to ensure that goals and expectations established by the state and district are being met.

The Visiting Team supports the recommendation of an expressed need for more time scheduled for training to allow the faculty to review diagnostic data and develop alternative instructional strategies. It is recommended that the school continue with this process through the action plan. Teachers must collaboratively evaluate student work and share best instructional practices in order to provide optimal learning opportunities for all students. The practice in place of observing other classrooms is going in the direction of sharing best instructional practices.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

Although most observed classes used primarily traditional lecture-based strategies, many faculty members were actively engaged in employing a variety of instructional strategies to meet a variety of student needs. During the visit students were engaged in cooperative group activities, question-and-response class activities, written tests, group problem solving, research and creative report writing, individualized activities using technology, student presentations, and science labs. The school would benefit if the variety of instructional strategies used could be more widely implemented throughout the school.

Students have expressed the desire to be actively engaged in their learning process. It is recommended that the faculty members continuously address this desire as they design instructional strategies for their content areas.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

According to Visiting Team observations and interviews, the staff members make themselves available to provide additional help for students before and after school. A variety of programs are offered to support student learning. These include Read 180, math tutors available after school, the Parent Teen program for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Charger Academy for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades, lunch with administrators, National Academic League, Math Counts, Science Olympiad, Geography Bee, Geography Olympiad, History Fair, Foreign Language Fairs, academic high honors, and academic honors rolls. The Visiting Team encourages Centerville Junior High to make sure each program has a firm foundation, is efficacious, and can be sustained.

#### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

It is clear to the Visiting Team that individual teachers are autonomous in developing their own assessments in order to evaluate individual classroom goals. The establishment of "School-wide Work Standards" is evident and posted in all rooms, but it is not clear to the Visiting Team that those standards are adhered to consistently by all teachers, nor that the students understand and follow them (although the standards are included in the Student Manual). There seems to be heavy reliance on the use of traditional assessment tools such as daily assignments (textbook and worksheet exercises), quizzes, tests, and projects, although several innovative project assignments were observed.

It is noted that the Quality Assessment Focus Group Report addressed student feedback, which expressed a desire to be given more explicit guidelines to explain the purpose of various assignments as well as clear expectations with regard to assessments. An informal estimate by one member of the focus group rated rubric use by teachers at 60 percent. The use of rubrics by more teachers, following effective professional development in the creation of appropriate and reliable rubrics, is suggested.

Action Plan Goal #4 describes the need to "develop new ways to recognize student achievement" as ongoing with counselors, teachers, and the Student Council, with Progress Indicators of Evaluation from students and parents and SEOPs, which seems contradictory to the goal. There is no indication that this action plan addresses the need for exploring and developing quality assessment techniques based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement, aside from the "involvement" in extracurricular activities the school offers. In addition, the responsible parties listed in this goal clearly indicate that this goal does not apply to student academic achievement assessment systems. Instead, it focuses on enhancing opportunities for students to feel connected to the school. Therefore, it is recommended that the school revisit the action plan to include the need for more comprehensive and more varied assessment practices in order for true evaluation of student achievement in all academic areas to be accomplished.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

While it is clear that some teachers employ a variety of assessments to determine the mastery of course concepts, it appears that some teachers limit their assessment strategies to tests, quizzes, and assignment grades. The focus group acknowledges that there is a need for teachers to investigate more research-based assessment strategies in order to determine that student learning does, in fact, reflect the intended purpose of the assessment as well as performance of state

standards. Although the students clearly know the names of the DRSLs, there was no clear indication that the students have been assessed in order to determine whether or not the DRSLs are being accomplished. It is suggested that the school continue to examine its DRSL rubrics and coordinate effective assessment strategies in order to determine both the effectiveness of the assessment strategies and the achievement of the DRSLs across all student population groups.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

Course disclosures by each teacher are clearly relied upon for fair implementation of assessment practices. There is an effort to eliminate "sibling bias," which evidently has been brought up by stakeholders as a concern. The use of standardized test scores appears to be heavily relied upon to place students in classes, a practice which needs to be closely examined and carefully overseen to remain fair and equitable, and used only in those certain subject areas where ability grouping is appropriate, while avoided in those areas where ability grouping would appear unfair and biased in terms of the educational opportunities provided to all students.

There seems to be strong communication among parents, counselors, and students with regard to assessment strategies when SEOPs are developed. It would be worthwhile to pursue involvement of the teachers in this process on a regular basis instead of on a "when needed" basis, since they are the very people responsible for delivering the knowledge and skills to the students in the classrooms and labs before the student can demonstrate his/her level of mastery on a standardized test.

It is clear that most teachers feel that they delineate and deliver to the student the criteria by which the student will be assessed. However, there are indications that students feel the need for more specific guidelines with regard to citizenship expectations across all settings, as well as within each teacher's classroom. This was indicated in the Focus Group Report, as well as through conversations with students.

Finally, while the school evaluated itself with very strong scores for the Five Principles of Quality Assessment Systems, it is the opinion of the Visiting Team that those scores are higher than is justified by the reality observed. This may be due to a limited number of teachers on the staff who are not engaged in developing quality assessment systems and who continue to rely on a narrow range of assessment tools that may or may not accurately reflect student achievement and yield generalized results, while others on the staff make up for this with a variety of quality assessment strategies which do yield generalized results for future planning. Although the achievement scores on standardized tests indicated in the self-study are highly commendable, there is no visible evidence of the use of Power Standards, vertical alignment of course objectives, or even

alignment of objectives among all members of a department. These areas would be suggestions for future implementation and professional growth for the staff.

# **Leadership for School Improvement:**

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The school leadership promotes quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning. The school is well established in an area where education is valued and expected. This leads to a sense of accomplishment on the part of some staff members that is due more to circumstances than quality instructional practices. The students are highly motivated to succeed regardless of the effectiveness of the instructional practices. During the Visiting Team's observation, most students were engaged in paper-and-pencil learning activities providing a fairly passive role for the teacher. The school is challenged to carefully evaluate current practices and explore and implement research-based best practices. The school leadership is fully aware of this challenge and is making every effort to support those teachers who are already implementing best practices, and to improve teaching and learning throughout all classrooms. Today's research indicates that students benefit from learning activities that are both rigorous and relevant. The Visiting Team suggests the school implement cross-curricular learning projects to provide the relevance.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The leadership of the school has recently experienced a change. The principal who led the school through most of the process was replaced by one of the assistant principals. Both principals seem to employ effective decision making. The school leadership is gaining experience with data in order to make decisions on behalf of the students. Read 180 has been adopted to help struggling readers. Data should be kept on the outcome of the program in order to determine its effectiveness.

The Visiting Team commends the school leadership for the collaborative nature of the school self-study, and encourages the formation of a leadership team including teacher leaders to meet regularly to collaboratively review progress on the action plan and make adjustments as necessary.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

As departments create curriculum maps and common assessments, the school will be better equipped to determine who is learning and who is not learning. Then the school can make data-driven decisions in order to close the achievement gap. Currently, the school is relying on data that is based largely on standardized tests. The school history of performance on these tests is consistently quite high. Development of common curricula and assessments will ensure consistency for each student and give the school more detailed data in order to improve programs. Some recent surveys given to teachers, parents, and students can help the school be reflective about its practice. In general, parents are satisfied with the programs of the school. During the parent meeting, they suggested more relevant, crosscurricular, and hands-on learning activities. They believe these types of instructional strategies will help their children make connections between the curriculum and the real world.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The Visiting Team commends the leadership for their efforts to provide a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. Parents and students express a feeling of comfort and safety in the school. Discipline problems seem to be infrequent and appropriately handled. The day-to-day operations of the school are effective. Allocation of resources is appropriate. Continued study of developmentally responsive practices for junior high students is suggested.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The implementation of the DRSLs and adoption of the action plan are fairly recent. Interviews indicate a strong commitment to aligning the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement efforts. The PTSA organization and School Community Council have been consulted on the allocation of resources toward these ends. The school improvement plan, Land Trust plan, and action plan show alignment. The students and staff know the DRSLs and understand their part in each classroom.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The Visiting Team commends the school leadership for the participation of the school community in student learning. Many students state that their motivation to do well in school comes from home. This view is shared by the school administration and the teachers. Parents are convinced the school is sincere about doing what is in the best interests of students. The Visiting Team suggests the

school collaboratively work to stretch its current capabilities by researching and implementing research-based best practices that are specific to early adolescent students. Such practices can be found through the National Middle School Association and its publications.

## **Community Building:**

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

Centerville Junior High School projects an image of school-wide community building. After a thorough perusal of the school's self-study document and having spent time in the school, it is clearly evident to the Visiting Team that Centerville Junior High School fosters working relationships inside the school.

Additionally, the school shows interconnectivity between the various factions that make up the school: parental involvement, teacher-student relationships, administrative support of faculty, and involvement in curricular and extracurricular programs. It is impressively evident that all stakeholders not only show concern, but have been proactive in areas of strengthening and nurturing the developmental processes for students at Centerville Junior High. The Visiting Team is impressed with the alignment and support the stakeholders show for the departments in the school. It is evident that the students feel a connection with the staff, administration, and counseling department in the school. Students feel safe and welcome at Centerville Junior High.

The Visiting Team recommends that the school community explore opportunities, through staff development, to extend course development in cross-curricular and scaffolding instruction to help better establish a "learning community" environment.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

Evidence exists of networking between the parents, administrators, and staff. This focus group demonstrated its collaborative networking within the self-study document and by its shared efforts, which are verified in the day-to-day operations of the school.

It should be noted that the Visiting Team believes that steps could be taken to encourage a school-wide feeling of harmony with regard to unsuccessful hopefuls trying out for various extracurricular activities, student offices, sports teams, and exclusive performing groups within the school. Collaborative efforts among peer groups, parent groups, and staff and administrators may be incorporated to assist students in being responsible citizens regarding the feelings of the students who

have tried out and not succeeded in fulfilling their ambitions. It is noted by the Visiting Team that Centerville Junior High provides many and various activities for student participation and that peer encouragement, rather than belittlement, will cultivate a feeling of goodwill between students who are and are not involved in school groups and activities.

# **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

Centerville Junior High has a mature faculty and staff, with 46 percent of the faculty having twenty or more years of teaching experience. Over half the faculty has multiple or advanced degrees, and several are currently enrolled in advanced degree programs. The teachers are encouraged to participate in workshops and conferences sponsored by professional associations and the Utah State Office of Education. The administration has provided funds to send teachers to the National Middle School Conference on a rotating schedule. An hour of weekly teacher inservice time is built into the schedule, and is used for collaboration and training to strengthen knowledge and skills. Trainers from the district have instructed the faculty on brain development, childhood obesity, curriculum mapping, and technology.

Centerville Junior High has an involved and supportive PTSA and Community Council that expect a high level of academic achievement and worthwhile extracurricular activities. These groups and the counseling department have done extensive surveying of the school stakeholders and have used the results in the school's self study. Fifty-six percent of those responding expressed concerns about "teacher quality." The Visiting Team did not observe a variety of teaching strategies during classroom visits. We strongly suggest that some time be devoted to the study of middle level best practices emphasizing the use of varied instructional methods and class management strategies to improve student learning as expressed in the school's DRSLs.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

Centerville Junior High, with strong community involvement and high expectations, has a good academic foundation and an overall commitment from a significant number of stakeholders to productive change and continuous improvement. The Visiting Team observed evidence of the inclusiveness of all stakeholders in developing the school mission statement, beliefs, DRSLs, self-study, and action plan.

# CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Centerville Junior High School is not seeking accreditation through the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools. Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

#### CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The school has made an honest effort to create an action plan to drive school improvement. The Visiting Team suggests the school review the plan to ensure each goal is a "SMART" goal: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. Goal #1, Focus on Continuing Student Achievement, allows the school to maintain the status quo with no improvement. No specific, measurable standard is mentioned. The action steps speak about improving math and reading, but list no improvement target or assessment to show that improvement. The steps involve mostly program implementation without a specific accountability for improvement. The following three goals again focus on "continuing" rather than on improvement of student achievement in a measurable way. These three goals focus almost entirely on program implementation. The school is assuming the implementation will improve student achievement, which will hopefully happen. These goals must be restated for specific impact in a measurable way on student achievement, then backed up with action steps that are time-bound rather than "ongoing" and be tied to a specific measurement to determine effectiveness. The current progress indicators are mostly just records that the step has been accomplished rather than records of the step's effect on student achievement.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The visit indicates sufficient commitment to the action plan from the school leadership and the school community. The Visiting Team senses some reticence from the school staff. While many teachers are willing to be reflective and improve practice, many others seem to be complacent about their practices because the school overall performs quite high on standardized tests. Some seem offended at the suggestion that their school could improve. Classroom visits indicate the students at Centerville Junior High School are highly motivated students who will rise to the challenge of a more integrated, relevant, and rigorous

curriculum. These students are undoubtedly the leaders of tomorrow's world. They deserve the very best a school can offer.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

The Visiting Team suggests the school revise the school-wide action plan, as previously stated, to include SMART goals focusing on student achievement with measurable targets and time-bound action steps.

The school improvement process should continue as the action plan is revised and implemented. The school should continue to be reflective and collaborative. It must accurately describe the current reality, describe what would be ideal, and then set realistic, measurable goals in order to move toward the ideal. The school should continue to work for commitment to the plan, realizing that even high performing schools can get better.

# CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

#### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends Centerville Junior High for the involvement of the entire school community in the educational process. All stakeholders have a voice: students, parents, businesses, teachers, and administrators.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for its sincere effort to complete the self-study process and make plans for school improvement. The process was collaborative and reflective.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration, faculty and staff of Centerville Junior High for creating a positive school environment where students feel safe and appropriate support is available to meet high expectations.
- The Visiting Team commends Centerville Junior High for the variety of academic and extracurricular opportunities available to students. A wide range of athletic, fine arts, and special interest programs are available.

## **Recommendations:**

The Visiting Team recommends that Centerville Junior High research and implement research-based middle level practices as described by the National

Middle School Association. These practices would include academic excellence, developmental responsiveness and social equity. Early adolescents, ages 11-15, are unique in their educational needs. Adolescents benefit from practices tailored to their needs.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the Centerville Junior High faculty work collaboratively to ensure a common curriculum and expectations for all students. This implies subject-level collaboration by teachers on curriculum mapping, effective instruction practices, and development of common assessments. The school should collaboratively answer the guiding questions: (1) What should students know? (2) How will we know when they know it? (3) How will we respond when they don't?
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school research and implement best instructional practices, using the DRSLs to create relevance in the curriculum. Students should understand how the things they are learning relate to their world, and should be pushed to "stretch" learning. Cross-curricular projects can help students learn valuable problem solving skills in order to apply previous knowledge to new and different circumstances.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school redefine the action plan to include SMART goals focused on improving student achievement. This will also require developing a data collection system with assessments to inform instructional practices and ensure increased student achievement.